

Buchanan, NY—World War II veteran Ken MacDonald finally received the benefits he's been waiting over 60 years for, thanks to U.S. Representative John Hall's (D-NY19) office. Today, Congressman Hall presented Mr. MacDonald with more than \$100,000 in benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

During the war Mr. MacDonald, a First Class Seaman in the Navy, served on two battleships that were both blown out from under him by enemy torpedoes. He spent hours floating in the sea, pulling other men into his lifeboat to save them and was hospitalized after both incidents. Mr. MacDonald suffers severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from these events, yet the VA has always diagnosed him as having schizophrenia instead of PTSD. A diagnosis of schizophrenia is not "service-related" and thus not compensable. After recovering physically in the hospital, Mr. MacDonald came home to his parents' house in Buchanan, where he still lives, and never married or had a family of his own. When his parents passed away, their neighbor and close friend Al Donahue, who serves as the Peekskill American Legion Post 274 Commander, took over as Mr. MacDonald's power of attorney and advocate.

Mr. MacDonald first applied for disability benefits with the VA in 1947 with no success. Mr. Donahue has tried multiple times to get VA disability compensation for Mr. MacDonald since 1975 but has had no luck. After receiving a letter in May from Congressman Hall about the help his office could offer veterans, Mr. Donahue decided to try one more time to get Mr. MacDonald the benefits he had earned.

"When I got the letter from Congressman Hall, I thought this was my last shot and that if Congressman Hall can't help, then I'll just have to give up," said Donahue.

One of Congressman Hall's caseworkers, Lisa DeMartino, began work on Mr. MacDonald's case in July and was able to help guide Donahue and MacDonald through the process of reopening the case with new and material evidence – documentation from Mr. MacDonald's doctor of the signs and symptoms of PTSD. At the end of November, Mr. MacDonald was granted "service connection" for his PTSD and was rated 100% for disability benefits. He received a retroactive check for \$98,777 and will receive disability benefits of \$2,471 per month for the rest of his life.

Because Mr. MacDonald is now rated "100% disabled" he also will receive dental benefits from the VA. This year he plans to get long awaited dental care from the VA that he has never before been able to afford. Mr. MacDonald also plans to use his money to begin repair work on the home he has lived in since he was a child.

"It is cases like Ken MacDonald that show me what a difference government can make in someone's life, how much we can really help," said Congressman Hall.